



82d Airborne Division

Loading aircraft.

82d Airborne Division

A Fight for Lodgement:

Future Joint Contingency Operations

By ANTHONY J. TATA

During the summer of 1994 the world watched in horror as Rwandan government forces composed of members of the Hutu tribe killed their rival Tutsi countrymen in a ghastly civil war. That campaign of terror was intended to methodically destroy the Tutsi minority while isolating the outside world from the conflict. Hutu forces seized Rwanda's only major airport, openly stating that their goal was to block the West from sending air-land relief forces and supplies to surviving Tutsi men, women, and children. The Hutu victory was total. While stark, brutal images of this tragedy remain, the strategically relevant issue is that the Hutus knew how to hinder intervention. The Rwandan civil war will go down in history for its savagery, yet it is a model that can shape future contingency plans and forces.

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Report Documentation Page			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
<p>Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.</p>				
1. REPORT DATE 1996	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED 00-00-1996 to 00-00-1996		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE A Fight for Lodgement: Future Joint Contingency Operations			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
			5b. GRANT NUMBER	
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)			5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
			5e. TASK NUMBER	
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) National Defense University, Institute for National Strategic Studies, 260 Fifth Ave SW Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, DC, 20319			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited				
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES				
14. ABSTRACT				
15. SUBJECT TERMS				
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 8
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON	

Simply put, in an era of sovereign borders and nationalistic forces, dissidents simply need to deny a strategic lodgement to their adversaries. There will not always be seaports like Dhahran or facilities like Howard Air Force Base through which to build up combat power. Contingency operations will most likely require forcibly opening lodgement. Only by exploiting the capabilities of the Armed Forces under joint task forces (JTFs) can the Nation conduct strategic power projection to seize lodgements and also achieve quick, decisive victory with minimal casualties.

The Theory

To establish a theater of operations a joint force must translate a few concepts into reality. Because the United States no longer enjoys prominent forward basing, a joint force must possess, first and foremost, a base of operations to build and further project combat power. Only then can it establish lines of communications through which a tactical plan is executed.

Naturally, the base of operations and supporting lines of communications are predicated on the enemy disposition. Therefore, the joint force must also identify decisive points at which it may direct its combat power. Frequently these decisive points may also be the enemy center of gravity or more indirect targets aimed at weakening the enemy's strength prior to engaging it directly.

Concepts such as bases of operations, lines of communication, decisive points, and centers of gravity translate into forcible entry plans for JTFs that focus on lodgements and simultaneously seizing other objectives. Even an unsophisticated enemy understands that intervening forces must have bases of operations. To refuse a base is to forestall intervention. Conflicts will accordingly boil down to initial struggles to establish lodgement, without which little else is possible.

Power projection means getting there quickly with something that can make a difference. Whether a base of operations exists in permissive or nonpermissive entry environments is largely irrelevant. To be effective, joint forces must plan for the worst case scenario when threats arise: nonpermissive entries require rapid projection of overwhelming combat power. U.S. Army Field Manual 100-5 provides succinct guidance on this point:

An important strategic consideration for planning contingency operations that involve the potential for combat is to introduce credible lethal forces early. Commanders should be prepared to deploy sufficient combat power to resolve a crisis on favorable terms.¹

Campaign plans must call for joint forces capable of seizing and establishing bases of operations that will support construction of a theater of operations and facilitate the concept of operation.

Courses of Action

Since the nonpermissive solution is somewhat simpler to predict, the following discussion makes the assumption that forcible entry is required to establish the base of operations. JFCs have an array of forces to choose from when planning a contingency operation. They may select Marine amphibious or air assault forces, Army light, air assault, or airborne forces, or special operations forces. Indeed, they may decide to employ a combination to maximize the strengths of each.

In considering all types of forces, power projection methods may be categorized as strictly airland or sealand, a combination of airland or sealand and airborne assault, or strictly airborne assault. As in the case of Somalia, using a strictly airland and/or sealand approach for lodgement drives the joint force to sequentially apply combat power. Regardless of the service component, all airland and sealand techniques require ferrying back and forth or economizing the force to the point that the risk may become unacceptable. It also takes longer to secure a lodgement, get onto lines of communication, and begin seizing decisive points.

The airland and sealand options depend on the availability of open airfields, usable ports, or accommodating beaches. Even if airfields and ports are available and are not blocked by enemy forces, sequential combat power build-up is slow. With multiple permissive entry ports as well as airfields, Desert Shield required five months to build sufficient combat power for Desert Storm.

As a force begins to project from a lodgement, airspace becomes congested with helicopters and planes competing for air corridors, increasing the risk to an operation. But most dangerous to the joint force is that it is tied to one location, which may become easy for an enemy to interdict. In Rwanda government troops preemptively seized the airport before any outside forces could airland. Sealand or air assault from naval platforms were not an option in the landlocked nation.

Using the abstract model a strictly airland/sealand course drives JFCs to seize a lodgement, build sufficient combat power, then execute ground tactical plans. The period between the seizure of lodgement and executing the ground tactical phases allows an enemy time to seize the

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Troop leaders prep.

airfields or alternate drop zones. If airland forces cannot conduct parachute drops, closure will depend on the availability of operational airfields.

Wargaming revealed that the essential advantage of combining airland/sealand and airborne forces is an accelerated build-up of combat power. Sixty C-130s can drop four fully equipped battalions in thirty minutes compared to thirty-six hours to airland the same size force. This course of action also allows commanders to place combat forces away from lodgement so that joint forces can seize critical objectives at the outset. More aircraft can drop added battalions and enough heavy equipment to give a force tactical mobility. The airland force could be rigged for airdrop to provide flexibility.

Analysis based on wargaming shows that the key disadvantage in this course of action is that the airland force may be tasked with critical missions, while its closure is dependent on airfield availability. An enemy would still have time to react to the objectives of airland forces. Moreover, although decreased, the time for combat power build-up still suffers at the hands of a sequential air flow determined by the maximum operating ground capacity of airfields. Typical airfields can handle four C-141s or eight C-130s every hour, which equates to nearly a battalion. That ground capacity is calculated to include the time it takes an aircraft to land, taxi to an offload point, offload, back taxi, and take off. Under analysis, these calculations resulted in the combination force seizing all 40 objectives in 24 to 48 hours.

Airborne Assault

JFCs may employ a strictly airborne assault force to seize lodgements and execute portions of a ground tactical plan which offers the most rapid closure. The Air Force can provide adequate C-130s and C-141s to airdrop assault echelons of nine combat battalions with enough equipment, supplies, and support personnel to seize a lodgement and other objectives simultaneously.²

As one assessment of the difference between airborne and airland forces in the planning for Operation Just Cause pointed out: "The fact is, we could get an airborne division on the ground in ten minutes or we could get an airlanded brigade in a day and a half."³ That comment emphasizes the fact that an airborne unit requires only the pass time over a drop zone and assembly time to be a cohesive combat force, while an airland force builds combat power sequentially and slowly. With simultaneity as a lynchpin for quick, decisive victories with minimal casualties, the airborne assault option appears the best suited to meet the Nation's high expectations.

initiative in areas not proximate to chosen lodgements, and perhaps even to increase defensive postures, take hostages, or attack friendly vulnerabilities. Adversaries could also exploit this time lag to influence international media to undermine national will and distort perceptions by the public.

In a generic theater with one airfield, one port, and three groups of 40 targets, wargaming confirmed that a force of eight combat battalions could airland or sealand, build combat power, and then seize objectives in 48 to 72 hours. It further revealed that cratering airfields or demolishing ships in port could exponentially delay closure and contribute to a piecemeal commitment of force.

Airland / Sealand and Airborne Assaults

Augmenting joint forces with airborne assets creates a course of action that utilizes a mix of airborne and air/sealand forces. Airborne forces seize airfields and decrease the risk of airlanding once assault objectives are seized. These forces can also airdrop airfield repair packages, vehicles, and tanks to give JFCs capabilities to repair airfield damage and simultaneously seize lodgement. Capturing a second drop zone away from airfields affords JFCs with flexibility in initiating ground tactical plans immediately or reinforcing the fight for lodgement.

Airland forces then arrive when the airfield was estimated to be opened by airborne assault forces. However, an enemy can extensively damage airfields, thereby increasing repair time and potentially disrupting subsequent time phased force deployment lists. Yet if airland forces are also rigged for parachute assaults, runway conditions become immaterial. Forces may be dropped onto

Wargaming demonstrates that airborne assaults quickly assimilate combat power and deny an enemy influence over operations. Other advantages are that when airfields are heavily defended or damaged, forces could simply use alternate drop zones, then attack airfields. This confirms that the airborne assault option is a sound method for establishing bases of operations while seizing the initiative at outlying objectives. Force build-up and objective

A division must focus its efforts by identifying the likely war plan. Then the staff should coordinate with higher headquarters as well as other services to develop detailed planning. A division can then derive its mission essential task list (METL) and develop its emergency deployment readiness exercise (EDRE) program that integrates contributions by the other services. A training management cycle should define wartime missions and develop plans, establish METLs, then plan, execute, assess training, modify plans, and finally retrain.

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seizure rates are linked and prove that simultaneity in forcible entry operations is best achieved by maximizing airborne capabilities.

The Army Role

The Army can exploit all means of employment—airland, sealand, air assault, and airborne assault—to seize lodgement and establish lines of communication necessary to enable JTFs to carry the fight to an enemy. Accordingly, the Army has a vital role in fulfilling joint power projection requirements of national military strategy. While combatant commanders attempt to resolve crises in their AORs with available forces and flexible deterrent options, force projection may be needed.

The Army offers the unique capability to a combatant commander to put trained and ready forces on the ground anywhere in the world on short notice—a rapidly deployable force to seize, hold, and control territory, with staying power that complements other forces in achieving tactical through strategic objectives. Army divisions are the basic contingency force fighting unit and they are instructed to prepare for such instances: "The first rule of anticipation in a force projection era is to expect to be alerted and deployed. Commanders everywhere in the Army must hold that view."⁴

Operation Uphold Democracy, the planned invasion of Haiti, validates the model described above. Analysis of the invasion plan provides accurate and timely visibility on the Army's ability to contribute in a forcible entry joint contingency operation where no friendly lodgements existed in country and those available for seizure were scarce.

The charter of all Army divisions is to contribute to joint forces by being trained and ready for H-hour. Indeed, when President Clinton recalled the 82^d Airborne Division, the 10th Mountain Division executed a permissive entry as JTF-190. Uphold Democracy showed that division level contingency operations from the continental United States (CONUS) are possible in the future.

Planning

The impetus to train and be ready for H-hour is dominated by the planning process. While tactical decisionmaking produces a concept that can drive training, other steps are required to create a well synchronized, successful plan. One proven technique for contingency planning is to employ the four phases of airborne operations: ground tactical, landing, air movement, and marshaling.

A division must first develop a ground tactical plan based on the course of action conceived during tactical decisionmaking. The staff develops a template of the threat and directed objectives, then groups them by proximity or similarity, finally matching friendly resources against all areas which call for force. Uphold Democracy required the 82^d Airborne Division to seize 40 objectives in 12 hours over an urban center with the population of Denver and geographic area of Boston. Accordingly, a requirement was stipulated to close maximum force as quickly as possible.

Resolving a ground tactical plan leads to developing a landing plan to include selection of drop zones, beach landing areas, or landing zones which best facilitate mission accomplishment. A landing plan facilitates executing a ground tactical plan, including seizure of lodgement. For the Haiti mission, 82^d Airborne chose two drop zones that afforded flexibility as well as rapid seizure of several primary objectives.

After designating a landing plan, air and sea movement plans must be developed to close the force into country. Initially, staffs must avoid making a ground tactical plan conform to stated airlift and sealift constraints. Efforts must be made to provide resources for ground tactical plans. The 82^d Airborne Division had 60 C-130s for drops over Port au Prince International Airport and 45 C-141s for drops over Pegasus drop zone. Another eight C-141s carrying 864 personnel were rigged for an airdrop but slated to airland at H+4 hours, providing the airport was open for airland operations. Also, three ships were scheduled to off-load at the port within the first 48 hours.

Finally, marshalling plans are perhaps the most difficult for a division-level contingency operation. The 82^d Airborne Division plan accommodated 113 aircraft involved in the assault force air movement plan and three ships available in the sea movement plan, as well as follow-on airland by using multiple air and sea ports of embarkation in CONUS.

While the four phases of airborne operations provide an excellent framework for planning contingency operations, detailed synchronization is required to account for the overlap and myriad actions of all phases. Wargaming and synchronization of battlefield operating systems are the best means of integrating contingency operations from the marshaling through ground tactical phases.

Training

A contingency division can extract METL from the newly developed "most likely war plan" with an eye on fitting into JTFs. Tasks such as "maintain division readiness to deploy worldwide within 18 hours notice directly into combat," "alert, marshal, and deploy the division," and also "conduct an (airland, sealand, or airborne) assault to seize an (airfield, landing zone, beachhead, or port) and/or establish a lodgement" become obvious METL items in a power projection world.⁵

Determining related battle tasks allows division commanders to isolate key components of likely war plans and establish aggressive joint force oriented EDRE programs. By challenging readiness each month, commanders can increase readiness and shape contributions to joint forces. In time EDREs should be more complex and difficult in order to exercise the maximum number of forces. For example, the 82^d Airborne Division with the Air Force conducted a battalion airfield seizure and noncombatant evacuation on an unfamiliar runway in South Carolina in late 1993. The heavy drop included two bladders of fuel to sustain aviation operations during the exercise.

In July 1994, by contrast, the entire division, several Air Force wings, Marine and Navy air-naval gunfire liaison company teams, and special operations forces participated in "Big Drop," an EDRE in which fifty C-141 equivalents and twenty C-130s dropped eight battalions, a security element, and 28,000 gallons of aviation fuel. The aviation brigade used strategic self-deployment, concluding with a four-hour flight over ocean at night, refueling at a new aviation assembly area, and mounting an air assault of three battalions on multiple objectives within an hour of a parachute assault. Establishing a lodgement and executing a ground tactical plan require extensive battlefield operating system synchronization which can be trained steadily while not deployed.



Airborne troops en route.

82^d Airborne Division

The intelligence community must focus on utilizing national assets and translating a wealth of information into exploitable intelligence at battalion level. Thorough intelligence preparation of the battlefield is a requisite. Accurate worst case analyses that does not underestimate an enemy must be provided. Timely en route intelligence is essential to contingency operations. A division probably cannot insert its long range surveillance detachment prior to H-hour. Other methods exist to attain early entry intelligence. Timely imagery is the prime source of intelligence in contingency operations requiring forcible entry. G-2 staffs must practice these tasks during EDREs to develop the skills to operate in a contingency environment.

The maneuver community is responsible for synchronizing all battlefield operating systems and other services in its tactical plans. When training is planned, a division staff should recall that an assault force ground tactical plan drives a joint force plan. Airland and sealand start only when lodgements are secure. As such, to train and be ready for H-hour, a division must continuously plan and execute complex joint training that tests actual force levels and timelines.

Great Inagua Island,
Bahamas.



82d Airborne Division

The primary fire support tasks in a contingency operation are to provide and/or control fires across a division zone as well as to integrate psychological operations and nonlethal fires into the scheme of maneuver. A division should rehearse counterfire techniques in training with AC-130s. While JTFs are responsible for preassault fires, a contingency division should routinely practice employing them in support of assault forces.

Engineers play a vital role in providing mobility support to ensure a lodgement can receive the

follow-on flow of forces and equipment. Light airfield repair packages, port opening teams, tanks to push containers off runways, and hotwire teams to start and move vehicles

which serve as obstacles are the kinds of tools used by engineers and assault forces in response to rudimentary but effective capabilities of adversaries.

Air defenders have a critical role in protecting lodgement and staging bases from air attack, particularly during vulnerable periods before significant assets are airlanded. Both Stinger missile gunners and Avengers can be airdropped with assault forces for immediate protection. When air

threats are minimal, air defense forces should practice using "weapons safe" controls whereby grip stocks and rounds are connected only by order of the commander.

Training combat service support for contingency operations requires a division to work the full marshaling phase of its EDRE program, then execute CDS resupply and medical evacuation planning. Combat lifesavers, tactical mobility, and advanced trauma life support packages dropped with assault forces provide initial medical coverage until sophisticated equipment can be airlanded. Assault forces should train taking three days of supplies into theater without overloading soldiers. In reality, combat service support planners should lighten individual loads, deliver rucksacks, and push package resupply by combat direction system drop, slingload, or airland.

Command and control of forcible entry operations requires that key leaders communicate en route and on the ground. JTF and division staffs should practice using airborne command posts such as EC-135s, airborne command and control centers, and joint airborne command and control command posts. Also, EDREs and other exercises should use secure en route communications and hatchmount satellite communications on aircraft with key leaders. Forces then should practice the evolution of communications in the theater, moving from rucksack radios to vehicle radios, then to retrain directed communications,

command and control of forcible entry operations requires that key leaders communicate en route and on the ground

and finally ending with theater-wide mobile subscriber equipment communications supported by contingency communications packages.

Soldiers and Equipment

Being ready for H-hour means recruiting and retaining quality soldiers who are prepared for difficult training and missions. Joint forces are responsible for accomplishing missions while caring for both soldiers and their families. Aggressive family support group programs, including suitable facilities and instruction, allow the individual soldier to concentrate on the task at hand.

Today's high quality soldiers are afforded leadership opportunities that increase readiness to meet the demands of lodgement and contingency operations. NCO courses produce team and squad leaders who can take charge in the absence of orders. Historically, lodgement battles have often rested on actions by small bands of paratroopers executing a mission in a decentralized way. The battle staff NCO course provides divisions additional expertise in tactical operations centers. Airborne, air assault, and Ranger training instill confidence in junior leaders. Officers attend basic and advanced courses to increase tactical proficiency while the U.S. Army Command and General Staff Officer College teaches field grade officers about employing forces on the operational level to achieve strategic goals. Professional development programs and individual reading programs must also reinforce lessons taught in the classroom. Although smaller, the Force XXI Army consists of well trained leaders and soldiers capable of training and executing forcible entry operations.

Modern equipment is key to outfitting soldiers for seizing lodgements and force projection. The Army continues to exploit the mismatch in capabilities of its adversaries. For example, night vision goggles and OH-58s provide contingency forces with the ability to exploit the darkness and achieve tactical surprise. Other technological advances critical to contingency operations are Q-36 counterfire radars, Avengers, and all source analysis systems.

Developing a plan, training to it, and employing state of the art technology enables today's Army division to be a credible asset for JTFs. The unique ability to seize a base of operations and rapidly stifle an enemy makes it particularly suited as the force of choice for power projection. As enemy forces realize that an opposing force cannot effectively intervene without a lodgement, and that airpower alone is insufficient as demonstrated in the Balkans, the first order of business for JFCs will be to open the door to a theater of operations.

Uphold Democracy

With no friendly lodgement or forces in country, the concept for Haiti called for a genuine forcible entry plan. The mission statement of the 82^d Airborne Division indicated that the operation would involve an attack by conducting multiple airborne assaults with follow-on airdrop/airland as the situation dictated. The essential tasks were to establish three JTF lodgements, protect American citizens and property as well as designated foreign nationals, and neutralize the Haitian military and police to create the conditions for restoring democracy in Haiti.

With 40 D-day objectives, the 82^d Airborne Division required an airborne assault force of 3,848 paratroopers using two drop zones and 113 aircraft. The 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment would seize the primary drop zone, Port au Prince International Airport, and follow-on objectives, including facilities that served as the seaport for lodgement. The 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment would relieve the 504th and expand the lodgement. The 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment would seize a second drop zone, Pegasus, a large division support command element, the aviation brigade assault command post, fuel/ammunition handlers, and a security element. Notably, this drop zone was designed for the 82^d Aviation Brigade to arrive from an infiltration site, drop its external store fuel tanks, and pick up the air assault task force. Some 71 heavy equipment platforms would be dropped into Pegasus, providing 28,000 gallons of aviation gas airdropped with refueling pumps, six M551 Sheridan tanks, enough mobility to move a rifle company, the better part of an antitank company, and back-up engineer equipment.

Operationally, Pegasus drop zone was an extension of the division's base of operations and an alternate drop zone in the event an airborne assault at the airport was untenable. Tactically, the drop zone was a consolidation point for most of the division's mobile assets, providing a force that could swing around the exterior of Port au Prince to seize outlying objectives and block the ingress and egress of enemy forces to and from the lodgement.

Division artillery would provide indirect fires from the airfield and command and control of joint fire support assets. The division support command would consolidate containerized delivery system bundles at Pegasus and help to run the airfield once the airland began. Since the division would fight primarily at night, every soldier in the airfield assault force had night vision goggles.

The Scenario

Light rain fell on the assault force at Pope Air Force Base as its paratroopers rigged their equipment beneath the wings of C-130 Hercules and

C-141 Starlifter transports in preparation for a combat airborne assault on two drop zones in Haiti. Another 4,500 paratroopers were processing through marshaling areas for airland operations to execute follow on missions and link up with 810 pieces of equipment the division sent by fast sealift and another 323 to be brought in by airland.

As directed by President Clinton, 32 C-130s left Pope and conducted an aerial link-up with 28 C-130 heavy equipment drop aircraft from McDill Air Force Base. In addition, 53 C-141s at three different ports of embarkation taxied into position for subsequent airdrops.

Meanwhile, the division exchanged 24 liaison teams with higher, adjacent, and subordinate units. The 82^d Aviation Brigade strategically self-deployed and infiltrated 33 UH-60s, 17 CH-47s, and eight OH-58s to Great Inagua, a remote island in the Bahamas off the northwest tip of Haiti, where crews were exchanged and the aircraft refueled. They were

being preparing to travel the last 200 miles to a selected pick-up zone and to execute three battalion level air assaults in the first eight hours of the operation. JTF-180, with the 82^d Airborne Division en route, was trained and ready to seize lodgements and execute the tactical plan.

The President had put in motion the largest airborne invasion since Market Garden during World War II and one day prior to Uphold Democracy. That a JTF was capable of placing eight infantry battalions, one armor battalion, an assault helicopter battalion, a cavalry squadron, and three days of combat service support assets in theater in four hours in a tactically coherent fashion demonstrates that the Army and its sister services can meet the joint force commander's needs in establishing a lodgement while simultaneously executing a ground tactical plan.

Force Projection

The preparations by the 82^d Airborne Division for Uphold Democracy offer considerations for joint contingency forces. They indicate what must be done in order to depart CONUS in good repair and deploy directly into combat.

- Be trained and ready not only to fight but to marshal and move on short notice.
- Focus training on the most likely war plan—battle focused training.
- Develop a plan which exploits and maximizes the capabilities of all components.
- Identify an enemy's center of gravity and attack it directly or through decisive points with overwhelming force using simultaneous operations.

■ Conduct emergency deployment readiness exercises that rehearse key components of the plan, particularly with joint forces.

■ Plan marshaling, air movement, landing, and ground tactical phases in detail.

■ Be innovative in planning—where particular types of forces are not required employ them in versatile ways as force multipliers.

■ Emphasize troop-leading procedures at division level—enforce the one-third/two-thirds rule, execute rest plans, and conduct rehearsals.

■ Never underestimate an enemy—study the courses of action open to each adversary.

■ Rehearse mobilization plans because they always require support from other units.

By adhering to these guidelines, a division staff can provide major subordinate commands with planning and training necessary for combat success. Uphold Democracy involved all types of forces. This discussion has focused on how one division fit into the establishment of a theater of operations, prepared for that role, and executed two phases of its assigned portion of the operation.

Joint forces will demand more resources and greater integration to keep pace in the future. First, we should replace aging C-141s with sufficient C-17s to project power and conduct forcible entries around the world. Without strategic lift for airdrop, the Armed Forces will be hamstrung in conducting strategic forcible entries. Second, we should procure fast sealift to move forces quickly to regional hotspots. Without adequate forward basing, fast sealift becomes paramount to following airborne or airlanded forces with sustainment for continuous operations. Finally, CINCs should continue to hold annual joint training exercises and focus them on power projection, forcible entry scenarios. No service can conduct forcible entries independently of JTFs. CINCs must continue to practice establishing JTF headquarters, and staffs should be tested on command and control of the myriad forces involved in JTFs. **JFQ**

NOTES

¹ Department of the Army, FM 100-5, *Operations* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1986), p. 2-1.

² 82^d Airborne Division, "Uphold Democracy: Military Operations in the Republic of Haiti," Operation Plan, annex C: Air Movement Plan (September 9, 1994).

³ Thomas Donnelly, Margaret Roth, and Caleb Baker, *Operation Just Cause: The Storming of Panama* (New York: Lexington Books, 1991), p. 89.

⁴ Department of the Army, FM 100-5, p. 1-1.

⁵ 82^d Airborne Division mission essential task list (May 1994).